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OUTGOING TELEGRAM **Department of State**

INDICATE: ☐ COLLECT
☐ CHARGE TO

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Classification

Origin

Info:

ACTION: AmEmbassy PHNOM PENH FLASH
INFO: Amembassy SAIGON PRIORITY
STATE 062712

NODIS/KHMER

Phnom Penh 656

1. You should see General Lon Nol as soon as possible and inform him that, in further pursuance of your previous statement to him and of the President's response to his letter, a major ARVN force, on April 28 or 29, is, with full USG understanding and backing, launching an operation against VC/NVA bases and forces entirely within the Parrot's Beak area of Svey Rieng Province. While U.S. forces will not directly participate in the operation, they will, along with other ARVN forces, take blocking positions at various points along the Vietnamese side of the border. To the maximum extent possible, exclusively ARVN air, helicopter and artillery support will be used but in case of necessity US units will be prepared to give such support.

2. The objective of the operation is to destroy VC/NVA bases, stocks and forces, and the ARVN forces will be withdrawn upon the completion of the operation. It is estimated that the ~~N~~ VC/NVA have

Drafted by: J:UAJohnons/bjk 4/25/70 | Tel. Ext. | Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by: J - U. Alexis Johnson

Clearances:

S/S - The Secretary (in draft)
Mr. Eliot

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some 5,800 troops, 20 base H areas and 17 storage sites in the area covered by the operation. With regard to Cambodians living in that area, ARVN forces will be under strict instructions to do all possible to avoid injury or mistreatment of the Cambodian population.

3. We hope to avoid sensationalized publicity on the operation and will do all possible, at least in its initial stages, to avoid picturing this as a major operation but rather handle publicity from Saigon in the pattern of the shallow border penetrations that have thus far taken place. (It is our feeling that as far as the VC/NVA are concerned, our actions will speak louder than words.) An attempt will be made to prevent public media representatives from accompanying the forces and it is suggested that Cambodia do what it can to prevent or discourage correspondents in Cambodia from entering the area.

4. When the extent of the operation becomes evident, President Thieu and GVN will be prepared to make statements on their intent promptly to withdraw from the area upon completion of the operation and measures being taken to assure humane treatment of the Cambodian population. The USG will also be prepared to confirm its backing and support of the operation.

5. It is of course our hope and expectation that this operation will in itself, and with the uncertainty that it may cause to other VC/NVA

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[redacted]

forces and bases in the border area, reduce the pressures and threats that the VC/NVA are able to bring upon the Cambodian Government and armed forces.

6. You should explore with Lon Nol the manner in which he would desire publicly to handle this matter. The alternatives as we see them are: (a) for him to say that he requested the operation or permit GVN to make such a statement, which he would not refute; (b) to permit GVN to say that he was informed in advance and did not object; (c) neither we nor GVN would say whether he had approved or acquiesced/~~and he would maintain that~~ but US and GVN would say that we had been advised GOC was opposed to deep penetrations and we did not consider that this was a deep penetration; or (d) when called upon to comment he would say that he was sorry that it happened but understood the necessity which brought it about, possibly welcoming Thieu's statement on withdrawal, if this has been made, or express hope that withdrawal will take place upon completion of the operation. Any statements of this kind would of course only be made when the extent of the operation becomes publicly evident and he is called upon to comment, which we would hope would not be before at least a few days have passed.

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7. In setting forth these suggested alternatives to Lon Nol you should encourage him to adopt alternative (d) rpt (d) but make clear that we are not trying to pressure him on selecting any one of them because we recognize the delicacy of this problem in terms of his position at home and abroad, and we want to be of maximum assistance in this regard.

END

[ROGERS]

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